

Ceritas

FALL 2020 RELEASE

Dear Friends,

We are checking in with a friendly reminder that our Fall Release is scheduled to close in one week on August 20th, or may close sooner as the wines are nearly sold out.

These wines are some of the standouts from the vintage. Carex Chardonnay (first release) is going to be a star in the lineup along with Porter-Bass. The Senna Pinot Noir combines the earthy minerality so common in Burgundian wines with the purity of fruit we've come to expect from the West Sonoma Coast. All four wines are classics in the making.

NEWS \ 2018 VINTAGE \ INTRODUCING CAREX AND SENNA

We have long wanted to work with some of the early meter-by-meter plantings on the Sonoma Coast. There are very few of them and the ones below are the granddaddies of them all. Our friend, Andy Smith, winemaker/owner for Dumol, approached Ceritas in early 2018 about the prospect of working with fruit from their O'Connell (Carex Chardonnay) and Estate vineyard (Senna Pinot Noir). This was a first for them and to this day, Ceritas is the only winery to work with fruit from this site other than Dumol. We are honored to work with this vineyard for these two wines and over the moon with the results. We think you will be too.

CAREX CHARDONNAY \ WEST SONOMA COAST

It's cold here, despite being a little further east than Charles Heintz or Porter-Bass. Sitting low in the valley puts this vineyard close to the daily ebb and flow of coastal fog. The fog spills into the vineyard early in the evening and leaves late morning, leaving just a few hours to absorb the sun. The vineyard is planted using the Old Wente Hyde clone at high density (approx. 5000 vines per acre) which results in small vines that need to ripen a smaller amount of clusters. The increased vine to vine shading creates a cooler environment to ripen grapes. Coupled with the meager soils, one thinks higher acidity and fresher fruit flavors – this is what we are looking for in Chardonnay. We could not be more excited about working with fruit from this site.

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Carex is an exquisite wine with tons of elegance. Sweet floral notes of jasmine and white peach are backed by mint, white pepper, crushed rocks, and lime. Striking inner sweetness and perfume. Very expressive and pretty. Silky, pure, and light on its feet. A perfect combination of brightness and depth. Think of a combination of Trout Gulch and Porter-Bass. Don't miss this new wine.

PORTER-BASS CHARDONNAY \ WEST SONOMA COAST

Porter-Bass sits on a saddle ridge between two deep canyons – Mays and Pocket – with openings on both ends, thus allowing the cool oceanic breezes to sweep over the site throughout the summer. Ceritas' Chardonnay is planted on northeast facing slopes, which means the vines spend less time exposed to the sun which in turn results in higher retained acidity, freshness, and thicker skins - think Chardonnay structure. Soils are a mixture of hardened sandstone and chert, which pushes the now nearly 40-year-old vines to search deep in the bedrock for water.

Stupendous, complex bouquet of grapefruit, crushed stone, and pressed yellow flowers, and with aeration, honeysuckle and bergamot explode out of the glass. The palate is underpinned by its power and intensity, yet there is a ton of elegance and nuance. Subtle spice with a long multi-dimensional finish. Wow.

SENNA PINOT NOIR \ WEST SONOMA COAST

Senna is situated smack dab in the middle of the rolling hills between Occidental and Sebastopol. The hills here allow the fog to pool and swirl around the vineyards, resulting in cooler temperatures than our mountain sites. This is the oldest of the Dumol Estate plantings, planted in 2004 to the hallowed Swan clone of Pinot Noir. Swan is rarely planted these days... its shy-bearing nature is the scrooge of growers but the resulting wines speak for themselves. It's a perfect match with the fractured sandstone soil. Small clusters of intense depth and concentration make for a wine that is unequalled in our portfolio.

Red and bright. On the nose, this wine reminds me of a great Chambolle Musigny 1er Cru. Offers up bright red cherries, kirsch, and cassis with pressed violet aromas that just burst from the glass. Vinified with 40% whole cluster and an equal blend of Calera and Swan, lending itself to a multifaceted, persistent wine filled with mystery and intrigue. Old World in the new.

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HELLENTHAL "OLD SHOP BLOCK" PINOT NOIR \ WEST SONOMA COAST

High up in the mountainous Fort-Ross Seaview appellation of the West Sonoma Coast there is little resemblance to other areas from which we make wine. Hellenthal is situated on the northern flanks of this area at 1300 feet elevation. Coastal fog winds its way up the Gualala River, bringing the influence of the Pacific right up to the feet of the vineyard. This is the oldest own-rooted Pinot Noir on the Sonoma Coast – planted in 1980 in partnership with David Hirsch, Gard Hellenthal took a leap of faith and it paid off in spades. Small berries the size of a pea give depth and concentration while retaining natural acidity. Monopole.

Deep and dark. Extraordinary pure bouquet of black cherries intermingled with oyster shell and a hint of Chinese five-spice. The palate is medium-bodied with fine tannins highlighted by the 50% whole cluster. Edgy and stony, with dark berry fruit and a long extended finish filled with lifted aromatics of cherry blossom and Seville orange. Classic Hellenthal.

2018 VINTAGE SUMMARY

Overall, the winter of 2017-2018 reminded us of the winters from decades ago. Rain fell every week throughout the winter, allowing the water to slowly and evenly penetrate deep into the topsoil and bedrock below.

Early spring was dry and sunny throughout. With favorable spring weather, bud break began around March 13th, almost a week earlier than 2017, and two weeks earlier than 2016. The beginning of April was cool, with the vines starting slowly but steadily growing without too many signs of stress. May was warm and dry and the shoots just exploded towards the top wire after growing so slowly for the previous two months. As we approached flowering, the forecast looked to be favorable for a healthy crop. Flowering took place under blue skies and warm temperatures, virtually eliminating crop loss. First flowers were observed on May 18th and full flowering arriving 4-8 days later depending on the site.

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For most of June and July, we saw normal summer temperatures allowing the coastal fog to influence the growing season more than any of the past 7 vintages. Things were looking like we might be harvesting in mid-September and our hopes were growing for the most classic growing season we had seen since 2005.

The beginning of August was cool, giving us hope that the warm conditions often experienced in August would not come. And the warmer temperatures DID NOT come. Moderate temperatures continued right through August and into the harvest. The moderate temperatures allow us to pinpoint our harvest date as ripening took place slowly and evenly, resulting in a great depth of flavors with higher than average levels of acidity.

In the end, we harvested most of the beautiful fruit in the middle of September. Yields were up slightly as compared to previous years – 1.72 to 2.42 tons per acre. We began harvesting on September 6th and concluded on September 25th.

This is a vintage that will be talked about for many years to come. Why? A heralded vintage such as 2018 doesn't happen as often as you think. Classic and about as close to perfection as one could expect.

We are thankful for your continued support of our family winery. Be well.

John and Phoebe Raytek